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The RED KNIGHTS OF MORDA

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PLUS A DOOMLORD DIES!
AND MAX WANTS TO BE A SPY!

The Red Knights of Morda

THIS IS A STORY OF SPAIN IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY... OF AN OUTLAWED CRUSADER NAMED JOHN MAROC WHO WAS MAKING THE LONG JOURNEY FROM AFRICA BACK TO ENGLAND... AND OF A MAGIC ARMLET, THAT GAVE ITS WEARER THE STRENGTH OF A GIANT, AND WAS KNOWN AS THE HAND OF ZAR.

A BURNING SPANISH SUN BEAT DOWN UPON THE TOURNAMENT FIELD AT THE CASTLE OF DON MIGUEL Y CIPRIANO, IN THE PROVINCE OF MORDA, FLASHING UPON THE ARMOUR AND LANCE-POINTS OF TWO GALLOPING CONTESTANTS.

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PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

NEVER HAD SUCH A SAVAGE AND MORE POWERFUL LANCE-THRUST BEEN SEEN BY THE TREMBLING WATCHERS.
AAAAGH!
THE RED KNIGHT WINS! AGAIN!
THE CONTEST CONTINUES. UNLESS DON MIGUEL ACCEDES DEFEAT, MY BROTHER KNIGHT WILL MEET YOUR CHAMPION, IN A BATTLE OF SPIKES!
WHO ARE THESE RED KNIGHTS, THESE MESSENGERS OF EVIL? WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? ALREADY THEY HAVE WON A FORTUNE IN RANSOM FROM OUR MASTER!

NOW TWO MORE CONTESTANTS FACED EACH OTHER ON FOOT, AND IN THEIR HANDS THEY CLENCHED THE DREADED SHIELD AND SPIKE.
IT IS DOMATILIO, THE BLACKSMITH. THE STRONGEST OF ALL DON MIGUEL'S PEOPLE. SURELY HE WILL DEFEAT THIS RED KNIGHT!
SPIKE SWINGING, DON MIGUEL'S BLACKSMITH LEAPED TO THE ATTACK.
YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS HAVE HAD VICTORY ENOUGH TODAY. BUT NO MORE!
WE SHALL SEE, PEASANT!
POINTED SPIKE CLASHED RINGINGLY AGAINST STEEL SHIELD, AND THEN...
HE HAS TRIPPED HIM! DOMATILIO FALLS!
UUUGH!
AS DOMATILIO FELL, A POWERFULL BLOW SMASHED THE SHIELD FROM HIS HAND...
A RANSOM FOR THIS DOG! OR HE DIES... NOW!

DON MIGUEL Y CIPRIANO ALONE COULD SAVE THE LIFE OF HIS BRAVE BUT DEFEATED BLACKSMITH.
TWO BAGS OF GOLD. I CAN SPARE NO MORE!
WHERE IS CARLOS, DON MIGUEL'S SON? IF ONLY HE WERE HERE TO STOP THIS SHAMEFUL CONTEST. WHERE IS HE?

AT THAT MOMENT, TEN MILES AWAY FROM THE CASTLE CIPRIANO...
A WILD BOAR! AND THAT MAN WHO SLEEPS WILL NOT SEE IT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!

THE HUGE BOAR TURNED AT THE APPROACH OF THIS NEW ENEMY. AND CHARGED AGAIN...
SQUEALING WITH RAGE, THE WILD BEAST CRASHED ITS HEAVY BODY AGAINST THE LEGS OF THE CHARGING HORSE, AND...
AAAAGH!
BUT EVEN AS THE NEEDLE-TIPPED TUSKS LUNGED AT THE SPRAWLING MAN... A HAND REACHED OUT...
YOU SAVED MY LIFE... NOW IT IS MY TURN TO SAVE YOURS!
IT IS AS IF THE BEAST WEIGHED NO MORE THAN A KITTEN! HE HAS THE STRENGTH OF A GIANT!
THE GREAT BEAST WAS FLUNG THROUGH THE AIR...

I AM CARLOS, SON OF DON MIGUEL Y CIPRIANO. I AM INDEBTED TO YOU FOR MY LIFE!
MY NAME IS JOHN MAROC. AND I, TOO, WOULD BE A DEAD MAN WERE IT NOT FOR YOU!
AND SO FATE BROUGHT TOGETHER TWO MEN... WHOSE FRIENDSHIP WAS TO BE TESTED IN BATTLE AND DANGER.
COME WITH ME TO MY FATHER'S CASTLE. HE WILL REWARD YOU GREATLY FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!
THE ONLY REWARD I WILL ACCEPT IS A BED ON WHICH TO SLEEP THE NIGHT.
FROM A GILDED CHAIR, EYES THAT GLITTERED WITH EVIL WATCHED THE NEW FRIENDS...
IT IS DON MIGUEL'S SON, CARLOS. HE ALONE COULD DEFEAT MY RED KNIGHTS!

KHALA, SEE THAT THOSE TWO DO NOT REACH DON MIGUEL'S CASTLE!
AND AS THE FRIENDS PASSED THROUGH A NARROW CANYON...
LOOK OUT! A LANDSLIDE!
A MASSIVE BOULDER JARRED TO A STOP AGAINST MAROC'S OUTSTRETCHED HANDS...
GET BEHIND ME, CARLOS!
IT WOULD TAKE TWENTY MEN TO MOVE SUCH A ROCK. YET THIS ENGLISHMAN HOLDS IT WITH EASE!
UNDER THE COVER OF DUST THROWN UP BY THE LANDSLIDE, THE FRIENDS SLIPPED AWAY...
LET US GET TO THE CASTLE QUICKLY, MAROC. THAT ROCKFALL COULD HAVE BEEN NATURAL, BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME IT WAS AN ATTEMPT TO KILL US!
BUT WHY SHOULD SOMEONE TRY TO STOP US REACHING YOUR FATHER'S CASTLE?

AT THE CASTLE CIPRIANO, THE VOICE OF A RED KNIGHT BOOMED ACROSS THE TOURNAMENT FIELD.
AS YOU HAVE NO MAN LEFT TO OPPOSE ME, DON MIGUEL, IT IS THE CUSTOM THAT YOU PAY WHATEVER RANSOM I DEMAND!
ALREADY YOU HAVE MY GOLD. I HAVE ONLY MY LAND AND CASTLE LEFT!
THEN CARLOS REPLIED...
NOT SO HASTY, SIR KNIGHT. I WILL CHALLENGE YOU!
CARLOS, MY SON, NO! EVEN YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ONE OF THE RED KNIGHTS!
I ACCEPT THIS CHALLENGE. SO THAT ALL MAY SEE THIS CONTEST, WE WILL FIGHT ON TOP OF YONDER TOWER!
FIRST I HAVE TO PUT ON MY ARMOUR. MAROC, MY FRIEND, HELP ME PREPARE MYSELF!

CARLOS, YOU ARE TIRED FROM YOUR LONG JOURNEY HOME. AS YOUR FRIEND, LET ME GO IN YOUR PLACE!
NO, ENGLISHMAN. I HAVE NEVER YET LET ANOTHER MAN FIGHT MY BATTLES FOR ME!
WITHOUT WARNING, MAROC'S FIST SWUNG...
UUUUGH!
THEN RATHER THAN SEE YOU KILLED, I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE... BUT THIS!
THE RED KNIGHT WAS WAITING AT THE TOP OF THE TALL TOWER.
IF YOU WIN, ALL RANSOMS WILL BE RETURNED TO YOUR FATHER. BUT IF YOU LOSE, DON MIGUEL'S PROPERTY GOES TO THE RED KNIGHTS.
STEEL CLASHED ON STEEL AS THE CROWD WATCHED, NONE OF THEM KNOWING THAT CARLOS' PLACE HAD BEEN TAKEN BY THE MIGHTY MAROC.

BUT TWO HUNDRED FEET AWAY...
KHALA'S SLINGSHOT CRASHED AGAINST MAROC'S HEAD... KNOCKING HIM OFF BALANCE.
UUUGH!
CARLOS IS ABOUT TO FALL!
AT THE LAST MOMENT, HIS FLAILING HAND CAUGHT AT A HOLD...
FOR THE VICTOR, ALL THE WEALTH OF DON MIGUEL! FOR THE LOSER... DEATH!

AS THE KILLING STROKE SLASHED DOWNWARDS, MAROC SEIZED THE RED KNIGHT'S WRIST.
WITH THE STRENGTH GIVEN HIM BY THE ARMLET HAND OF ZAR, MAROC SWUNG HIS OPPONENT DIZZILY INTO THE AIR.
NO! NO! MERCY!

THE RED KNIGHT WAS HURLED BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DEATH.
I SURRENDER! DON'T SLAY ME!
YOU DO NOT DESERVE MERCY. BUT NEITHER DO I KILL UNNECESSARILY!
EVEN AS THE SLING-STONE SPED TOWARDS ITS TARGET, MAROC HOISTED THE TREMBLING KNIGHT TO HIS FEET... AND...
AAAGH!

AS THE LIFELESS BODY OF THE RED KNIGHT SLUMPED TO THE TOWER TOP, MAROC SEARCHED FOR THE HIDDEN MARKSMAN.
WHOEVER IS OUT THERE MUST BE A MAN OF GREAT STRENGTH AS WELL AS SKILL. A DANGEROUS ENEMY INDEED!
THE REMAINING RED KNIGHTS KNEW WHO IT WAS.
IT WAS KHALA. FOR EACH OF US DEFEAT MEANS DEATH! AND NOW WE MUST FIGHT AGAIN!
EXCITEMENT AROUND THE TOURNEY FIELD REACHED FEVER PITCH. NONE OF THE CROWD KNEW THAT MAROC HAD TAKEN CARLOS' PLACE.
THIS TIME THEY FIGHT WITH SHIELD AND SPIKE!

MAROC THE MIGHTY'S SECOND VICTORY CAME EVEN MORE SWIFTLY.
NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH STRENGTH IN A BLOW. HE'S RIPPED THAT SHIELD AS IF IT WERE PAPER!
BUT BEFORE THE THIRD CONTEST COULD BEGIN...
IT WILL BE DARK WITHIN MINUTES! THE FIGHTING WILL CONTINUE ... TOMORROW!
I MUST RETURN SWIFTLY TO CARLOS. NO ONE MUST KNOW IT WAS NOT HE WHO FOUGHT TODAY!
CARLOS! CARLOS! WHY DOESN'T MY OWN SON COME TO GREET ME?
LET CARLOS FIRST REMOVE HIS ARMOUR. THEN HE WILL COME TO YOU!

BUT CARLOS HAD BEEN LOCKED IN HIS ROOM.
YOU SHUT ME IN HERE WHILE YOU WENT TO FIGHT MY BATTLES, MAROC! ARE YOU A MAN WITHOUT ANY SENSE OF HONOUR?
I AM YOUR FRIEND, CARLOS. THAT IS WHY I DID IT!
NO ONE REALISES IT WAS NOT YOU OUT THERE. AND WHEN YOU GREET YOUR FATHER YOU MUST NOT TELL HIM OTHERWISE!
YOU EXPECT ME TO LIE? TO ACCEPT THE HONOUR THAT BELONGS TO YOU!
NIGHT HAD FALLEN SWIFTLY, AND WITH THE DARKNESS CAME A HUGE AND SINISTER FIGURE...
YOU MUST DO AS I SAY, CARLOS. BELIEVE ME, THERE IS A POWER BEHIND THESE RED KNIGHTS WHICH WILL TAKE ALL OUR STRENGTH AND WISDOM TO OVERCOME!
BUT AS MAROC AND CARLOS SLEPT A RAGGED GYPSY PEDLAR EASED HIMSELF THROUGH THE WINDOW OF THEIR ROOM...
THERE IS THE ARMLET I AM AFTER. I SAW IT FLASH IN THE SUN DURING THE TOURNEY THIS AFTERNOON. IT MUST BE MADE OF SOLID GOLD!

BUT AS THE THIEF HELD THE PRIZE IN HIS HAND...
THAT WAS THE CREAK OF A FLOOR-TIMBER. SOMEONE IS COMING INTO THIS ROOM. I MUST HIDE!
MOMENTS LATER, A HUGE FIGURE MOVED CAUTIOUSLY TOWARDS THE SLEEPING CARLOS...
THAT IS THE ONE! CARLOS, THE SON OF DON MIGUEL!
THE LITTLE GYPSY WAS A THIEF, BUT NOT ROGUE ENOUGH TO ALLOW A HELPLESS MAN TO BE SLAIN IN HIS SLEEP.
SENOR, WAKE UP! HE'S GOING TO KILL YOU!
WHAT? WHO IS THAT?

A BLOW FROM A MASSIVE-MUSCLED ARM SENT CARLOS REELING.
UUUUGH!
YOU'RE GOING TO TELL US WHO YOU ARE, AND WHO SENT YOU HERE!
BUT THE STRENGTH FROM THE MAGIC HAND OF ZAR NO LONGER FLOWED THROUGH MAROC'S VEINS...
HE'S AS STRONG AS A BEAR. WITHOUT THE ARMLET TO HELP ME I'M NO MATCH FOR HIM!
FOOL. NO-ONE CAN DEFEAT KHALA THE STRONG!
AAAGH!

MAROC WAS UNCONSCIOUS FOR SEVERAL MINUTES. THEN...
WHERE... WHERE IS HE? WHAT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW, SIRE. FOR I, TOO, WAS KNOCKED SENSELESS WHEN YOU FELL UPON ME. BUT AT LEAST THAT BRUTE LEFT US ALIVE!
THEN MAROC SAW THE MAGIC ARMLET CLUTCHED IN THE GYPSY'S HAND...
I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD THANK A THIEF FOR COMING TO ROB ME.
SIRE, I... I SWEAR I ONLY CAME TO ADMIRE YOUR ARMLET. HERE, TAKE IT BACK, SIRE...
IT WAS ONLY THEN THAT MAROC REALISED WHAT WAS WRONG.
CARLOS! HE'S NOT HERE!
PLEASE, SIRE, DON'T TURN ME OVER TO DON MIGUEL. THIS POOR FRAIL BODY WOULD BE BEATEN. CAST INTO A DAMP DUNGEON...

OUTSIDE, THE CROWDS WERE GATHERING ABOUT THE TOURNEY FIELD.
WITH LUCK, CARLOS WILL DEFEAT THE REST OF THE RED KNIGHTS TODAY. AND HIS FATHER, DON MIGUEL, WILL HAVE HIS RANSOM MONEY RETURNED TO HIM!
I MUST CONTINUE TO FIGHT IN CARLOS' PLACE. HELP ME ON WITH THIS ARMOUR, AND KEEP YOUR MOUTH CLOSED ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN!
THOUSAND BLESSINGS FALL UPON YOU, MERCIFUL SIRE: RAMON THE GYPSY WILL NEVER FORGET YOU!

AN HOUR LATER ANOTHER RED KNIGHT FELL TO THE HAND THAT WORE THE ARMLET OF POWER.
MERCY! MERCY!
WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO CARLOS? NO-ONE GUESSED HE POSSESSED SUCH STRENGTH!
AS MAROC WAITED FOR THE NEXT BOUT...
KHALA!
I BRING WORD FROM MY MASTER, YOU WHO PRETEND TO BE CARLOS!
THIS IS HIS MESSAGE. YOU WILL WIN NO MORE OF THE TOURNEYS. YOU WILL ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE DEFEATED... OR THE REAL SON OF DON MIGUEL WILL DIE!

SO THE LIFE OF THE SON OF DON MIGUEL IS IN YOUR HANDS, STRANGER!
MAROC'S BRAIN WAS WHIRLING AS HE RODE ON TO THE TOURNEY FIELD, STILL WEARING CARLOS' ARMOUR.
AND EVEN IF I LOSE I HAVE ONLY KHALA'S WORD THAT CARLOS STILL LIVES! CAN HE BE TRUSTED?
IF I CONTINUE TO DEFEAT THE RED KNIGHTS CARLOS WILL DIE. AND IF I LOSE TO THEM, DON MIGUEL WILL BE ROBBED OF ALL HE POSSESSES!
GRAPPLING WITH THIS TERRIBLE PROBLEM, MAROC BARELY HEEDED HIS OPPONENT, UNTIL..
CARLOS IS UNSEATED!

MAROC'S SHIELD BUCKLED UNDER ANOTHER BLOW...
CARLOS IS UNARMED! DEFENCELESS!
I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO. BUT FIRST I MUST SAVE MY OWN SKIN!
POWERED BY THE MAGIC ARMLET, HE RIPPED THE THICK SADDLE GIRTH APART LIKE PAPER.
AAARGH!
MAROC DIVED BETWEEN THE POUNDING HOOVES...
YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE! NOW IT'S MY TURN!

AS THE RED KNIGHT CRASHED TO THE GROUND...
HEAR ME, YOU DOGS WHO CALL YOURSELVES THE RED KNIGHTS! WHERE YOU HAVE FAILED TO BEAT ME IN COMBAT... YOUR MASTER HAS SUCCEEDED BY FOUL CUNNING!
I WILL FIGHT YOU NO MORE ON THIS TOURNEY FIELD. VICTORY IS YOURS!
IS CARLOS OUT OF HIS MIND? HE HAS PROVED HIMSELF MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THESE RED KNIGHTS. YET HE HAS PUBLICLY DECLARED HIMSELF THE LOSER!

BRUISED AND SHAKEN, THE RED KNIGHTS CLIMBED SULLENLY TO THEIR FEET.
YOUR CHAMPION HAS ACKNOWLEDGED DEFEAT, DON MIGUEL. AS A MAN OF HONOUR YOU MUST AGREE TO THE RANSOM AS PROMISED. AT DAWN TOMORROW WE WILL RETURN TO TAKE FROM YOU YOUR CASTLE, LAND AND ALL YOUR GOLD!
I GAVE MY WORD. I WILL STAND BY IT!
MY SON, CARLOS. WHY DID YOU ACCEDE DEFEAT? ARE YOU WOUNDED?
DON MIGUEL, I CAN NO LONGER KEEP UP THIS PRETENCE!
MAROC THE MIGHTY DREW OFF HIS HELMET..
I AM NOT YOUR SON, CARLOS. BUT I WILL EXPLAIN...
NOW WE UNDERSTAND! IT IS A TRICK! THIS ROGUE IS IN LEAGUE WITH THE RED KNIGHTS!

MAROC'S WORDS WERE DROWNED IN A ROAR OF ANGER...
DON MIGUEL, THIS WRETCH HAS UNDOUBTEDLY KILLED CARLOS!
SLAY HIM ALSO!

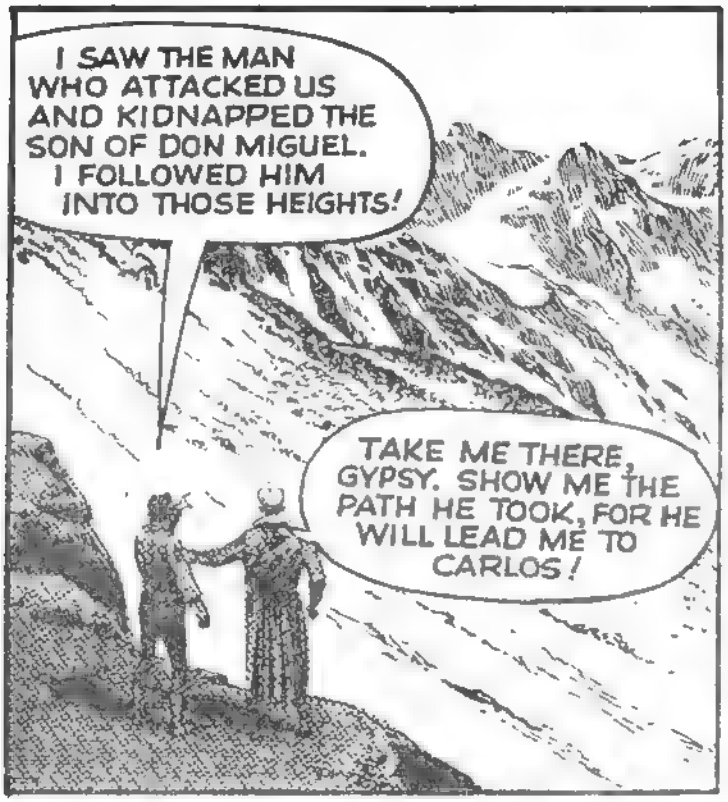
THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING MAROC COULD DO...
THEY WON'T LISTEN TO ME!
STOP HIM! DON'T LET THE KILLER OF CARLOS ESCAPE!

AND AS THEY WATCHED...
AFTER HIM!
I CANNOT FIGHT AND HARM DON MIGUEL'S MEN. AND THEY ARE TOO ANGRY TO REASON WITH. I MUST GET AWAY AND SEARCH FOR CARLOS ALONE!

BUT AS MAROC NEARED A BRIDGE ACROSS A RAVINE...
HIS HORSE HAS TRIPPED! DON'T GIVE THE ROGUE A CHANCE TO LIE! SLAY HIM!
AAARGH!
THE FOOL TRIES TO RUN FROM US! ON FOOT!
WE HAVE HIM NOW! KILL THE SLAYER OF DON MIGUEL'S SON!
BUT THEY HAD NOT RECKONED ON THE GIANT'S STRENGTH THAT FLOWED FROM MAROC'S MAGIC ARMLET...
BACK! BACK OR WE WILL FALL TO OUR DEATHS!

MAROC STRODE ON. THEN...

FOOTSTEPS!
NO, ENGLISHMAN! DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME? I AM YOUR FRIEND!
RAMON THE GYPSY! WHAT BRINGS YOU BACK ON THE ROAD TO DON MIGUEL'S CASTLE? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE TO STEAL?


I SAW THE MAN WHO ATTACKED US AND KIDNAPPED THE SON OF DON MIGUEL. I FOLLOWED HIM INTO THOSE HEIGHTS!
TAKE ME THERE, GYPSY. SHOW ME THE PATH HE TOOK, FOR HE WILL LEAD ME TO CARLOS!

HOURS LATER THEY CAME TO THE EDGE OF A GRIM CHASM...
STRANGE! THESE TRACKS FINISH RIGHT AT THE EDGE. ALMOST AS IF THERE HAD ONCE BEEN A BRIDGE HERE!
THERE IS DANGER HERE, ENGLISHMAN. WE GYPSIES KNOW SUCH THINGS. I CAN SMELL IT IN THE VERY AIR!

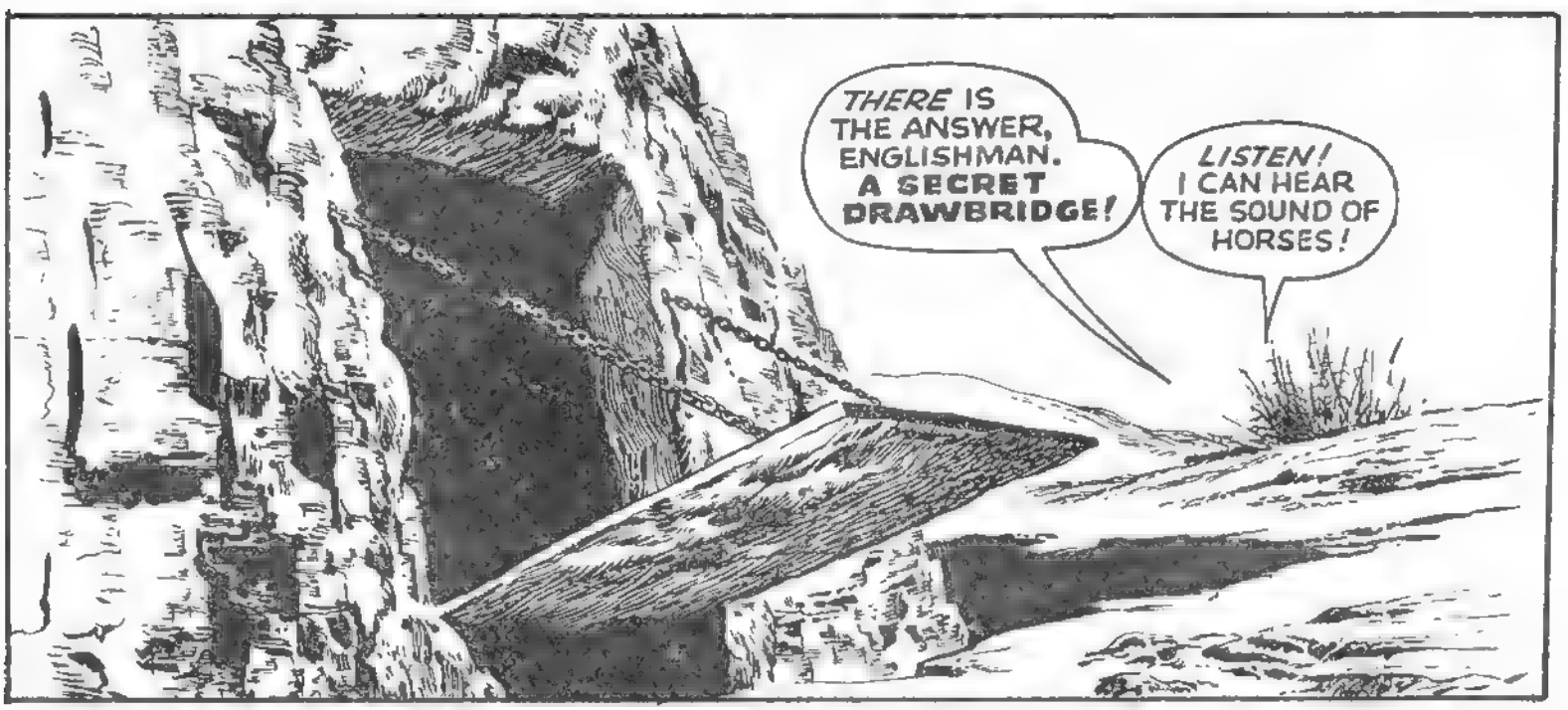
SUDDENLY...
BEHIND US! IT IS ONE OF THE RED KNIGHTS!

MAROC SPRANG... HANDS REACHING FOR THE THICK BOUGH ABOVE HIM...
AAAAGH!
MERCY! DON'T SLAY ME!
DO AS I SAY AND I WILL SHOW YOU MERCY. I WANT INFORMATION FROM YOU, NOT YOUR MISERABLE LIFE!
BUT STILL THE TERRIFIED KNIGHT BACKED AWAY. UNTIL...
I CANNOT TELL YOU ANYTHING! I DARE NOT FOR FEAR THAT... UUUUGH!
HE'S FALLING INTO THE CHASM!

I WILL TELL YOU ANYTHING! BUT SAVE ME! SAVE ME!
HOLD ON! I WILL CLIMB DOWN TO YOU!
BEFORE MAROC COULD REACH HIM, THE RED KNIGHT'S FINGERS SLITHERED FROM THEIR HOLD...
AAAIEEE!
AS THE RED KNIGHT FELL, THE SWAMP WATER SURGED, AND AN ENORMOUS MONSTER RAISED ITS HEAD ABOVE THE SURFACE.
NO! NO! THE CREATURE IS GIGANTIC... AND ENGLISHMAN, THE SCRUB YOU ARE CLINGING TO — IT IS BREAKING!

THE SCRUB IS BREAKING UNDER MY WEIGHT! I AM FINISHED!
ONCE AGAIN IT WAS RAMON WHO CAME TO MAROC'S RESCUE.
TAKE HOLD, ENGLISHMAN. I WILL TIE THE OTHER END ROUND A TREE!
IT WAS LUCKY I FOUND THIS LENGTH OF SILK, ENGLISHMAN!
I'LL WAGER YOU *FOUND* THIS SILK IN DON MIGUEL'S CASTLE, YOU THIEVING GYPSY!

BUT WE ARE BACK WHERE WE STARTED, GYPSY. WE STILL DO NOT KNOW HOW THE MAN WHO KIDNAPPED CARLOS CROSSED OVER THIS RAVINE!
NOR *WHY* HE CROSSED IT! THERE IS NOTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE BUT THAT ROCKY HILL!
SUDDENLY MAROC HEARD ANOTHER SOUND ABOVE THE BUBBLING OF THE STEAMING SWAMP BELOW.
THAT NOISE IS COMING FROM THE HILL! QUICK, GYPSY, HIDE YOURSELF!


THERE IS THE ANSWER, ENGLISHMAN. **A SECRET DRAWBRIDGE!**
LISTEN! I CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF HORSES!

THE RED KNIGHTS! THEY COME FROM *INSIDE* THE HILL!
MOST LIKELY THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY TO COLLECT THE RANSOM FROM DON MIGUEL. WATCH CLOSELY, I WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS NOW!
A HIDDEN LEVER. NOW WE KNOW WHY THE TRACKS FINISHED AT THE EDGE OF THE CHASM, GYPSY. AND NOW WE KNOW HOW *WE* CAN GET INTO THAT HILL!

CAUTIOUSLY, MAROC WAITED UNTIL THE RED KNIGHTS WERE OUT OF SIGHT. THEN...
ARE YOU NO LONGER INTERESTED IN STAYING ALIVE, ENGLISHMAN? THERE MAY BE OTHERS IN THERE WHO'LL HEAR THE DRAW-BRIDGE LOWERING
KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN, GYPSY. AND ABOVE ALL, MAKE NO NOISE!
PERHAPS! BUT CARLOS MAY BE IMPRISONED IN THERE, AND THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO REACH HIM!
I AM TRYING TO BE SILENT, MAROC. BUT MY TEETH ARE CHATTERING LIKE CASTANETS!
SUDDENLY A BREEZE PARTED THE SWIRLING MIST...
MAROC, LOOK!
A ROCK-THROWING CATAPULT... AND AIMED AT US!

BUT THANKS TO THAT BREEZE WHICH HAD MOMENTARILY PARTED THE MIST, MAROC THE MIGHTY WAS READY.
BY THE STARS! THIS ENGLISHMAN MUST BE STRONGER THAN A *THOUSAND* MEN!
THIS ONE MAN IS AS INVINCIBLE AS A MIGHTY ARMY. I AM THANKFUL THAT HE IS MY FRIEND AND NOT MY ENEMY!
AAAAGH!

THEN THROUGH THE MIST STRODE A MAN AS HUGE AS MAROC HIMSELF.
I MET YOU BEFORE, AND DEFEATED YOU, ENGLISHMAN! HAVE YOU THE COURAGE TO MEET ME AGAIN?
IT IS THE MAN THE RED KNIGHTS CALL KHALA. THE MAN WHO TOOK CARLOS AWAY!
MAROC AND KHALA CLOSED IN COMBAT... ABOVE THE MIDDLE OF THE CHASM, WHERE THE SWAMP STEAM BILLOWED THICKEST
YOU HAVE SEEN THE CREATURE THAT WAITS IN THE SWAMP BELOW US. WHICH-EVER ONE OF US IS THROWN FROM THIS BRIDGE DIES!
INCH BY INCH MAROC WAS THRUST BACKWARDS...
HERE IN THIS MIST THE ARMLET OF ZAR CANNOT HELP ME. AND WITHOUT IT, KHALA'S STRENGTH IS MIGHTIER THAN MINE!

THEN RAMON THE GYPSY LEAPT FORWARD...
MISERABLE THIEF THOUGH I AM, I CANNOT RUN AND LEAVE A FRIEND TO DIE!
UUUUGH!
FLEE, MAROC! SAVE YOURSELF!
AS KHALA FELL WITH A CRASH...
COME, RAMON! QUICKLY!
WHY ARE WE RUNNING THIS WAY, MAROC? THAT IS THE WAY WE SHOULD FLEE TO SAFETY!

WE CAME TO RESCUE CARLOS, FRIEND GYPSY. DON'T BE AFRAID!
DON'T BE AFRAID? LOOK, KHALA IS COMING AFTER US!
THEN MAROC TURNED TO FACE THE HUGE, MENACING FIGURE STUMBLING THROUGH THE MIST TOWARDS THEM...
HERE, WHERE THE MIST IS THINNER, THE SUN CAN SHINE UPON THE HAND OF ZAR. NOW I AM READY FOR KHALA!
WITH THE GIANT STRENGTH FROM THE MAGIC ARMLET FLOWING THROUGH HIS VEINS ONCE MORE, MAROC STRUCK...
AAAAGH!
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND IT! A MOMENT AGO YOU WERE NO MATCH FOR HIM. NOW YOU FELL HIM WITH ONE BLOW!

POWER-PACKED ARMS SWUNG KHALA ABOVE THE CHASM WHERE A HIDEOUS SWAMP BEAST WAITED BELOW...
TELL US WHERE WE CAN FIND CARLOS. SPEAK! OR THAT SWAMP CREATURE SHALL FEED UPON YOU!
DON'T! DON'T. I-I'LL TELL YOU!
BUT NEXT MOMENT...
MAROC, SOMEONE IS PULLING UP THE DRAWBRIDGE!
AS THE DRAWBRIDGE MOVED, THE THREE OF THEM WERE FLUNG IN A TANGLED HEAP INTO THE BLACK ENTRANCE IN THE ROCK FACE.

THESE ARE THE MEN WHO TRIED TO TAKE US BY SURPRISE WHEN THE DRAWBRIDGE WAS LOWERED. THEY ARE STILL UNCONSCIOUS!
KHALA, TOO — SEE IF YOU CAN FIND SOMETHING TO TIE HIM UP, RAMON!

COME, RAMON. WE MUST SEE WHERE THIS PASSAGE LEADS!
I CAN'T HEAR A SOUND. YET SOMEONE MUST BE HERE. THAT DRAWBRIDGE WOULD NOT HAVE MOVED BACK ON ITS OWN ACCORD!

THE PASSAGE ENDED IN A VAST AND SUNLIT CHAMBER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. THERE'S NO-ONE HERE!
YES, THERE IS, MAROC! SOMEONE IS WATCHING US! WE GYPSIES CAN SENSE SUCH THINGS!

IT HAS SUDDENLY BECOME... DIFFICULT TO BREATH!
MAROC, MY HEAD... IT SPINS...!
HIGH ABOVE THEM SAT AN OLD MAN CALLED SATANA, WHO SECRETLY CONTROLLED THE RUTHLESS WARRIORS KNOWN AS THE RED KNIGHTS.
THE VAPOURS BRING SLEEP TO THE GIANT FOREIGNER. SLEEP WHICH FOR HIM WILLBE EVERLASTING!
NO! I HAVE DECIDED THESE TWO INTERLOPERS SHALL NOT DIE! THE MIST OF DEATH MUST BE CLEARED!

HISSING WINDS BLEW AWAY THE DEADLY VAPOUR...
BRING KHALA TO ME. THESE TWO HAVE INJURED HIS PRIDE GREATLY. HE WILL ENJOY DISPOSING OF THEM MORE SLOWLY ...AND PAINFULLY!

RAMON THE GYPSY WAS THE FIRST TO REGAIN HIS SENSES...
WHAT HAPPENED TO US? WHERE AM I? AND WHAT IS THAT STRANGE CREAKING SOUND?

THEN THROUGH THE IRON BARS OF A DUNGEON HE SAW KHALA...
GOOD! I AM GLAD THAT ONE OF YOU AT LEAST HAS REVIVED... SO THAT YOU CAN WATCH DEATH CLOSE IN UPON YOU!
WHAT DOES HE MEAN?

THEN THE GYPSY REALISED WHAT CAUSED THE CREAKING SOUND...
THE WALLS ARE MOVING! THEY WILL CRUSH US ON TO THOSE SPIKES!

SECONDS LATER, MAROC CAME TO HIS SENSES...
QUICKLY, ENGLISHMAN. SAVE US!

INSIDE HERE, WHERE THE SUN CANNOT SHINE UPON THE ARMLET HAND OF ZAR, MY STRENGTH IS NO GREATER THAN THAT OF OTHER MEN, RAMON. BUT... I MUST TRY...!

AS MAROC PUSHED AT THE WALL WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH...
THE WALLS ARE MOVING BACK! SOMEHOW MY GIANT'S STRENGTH IS STILL WITH ME!

THEN, AS SATANA'S SPEARMEN RUSHED TOWARDS THEM, MAROC JERKED THE IRON GRILLE FORWARDS...
KILL THEM!
I WAS FORGETTING YOUR GREAT STRENGTH MAROC. NOW I AM NO LONGER AFRAID!

MAROC THE MIGHTY SCOOPED UP THE HUGE KHALA AS IF HE WEIGHED NO MORE THAN A KITTEN...
BOLT THE DOOR ON SATANA'S WARRIORS, GYPSY, AND THEN STAY CLOSE WITH ME.
NEVER FEAR, MAROC. I AM NOT LETTING YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT!
BUT AS THEY MOVED ALONG A PASSAGE...
GOLD... AND SILVER! DIAMONDS, JEWELS! MORE WEALTH THAN THIS POOR GYPSY HAS EVER SEEN IN HIS LIFE!
I CAN HEAR VOICES AHEAD OF US, RAMON. AND THE CLASH OF ARMS!
IN A GREAT HALL, SATANA WATCHED A DOZEN DESPERATE DUELS WITH DISGUST...
NONE OF THESE MISERABLE DOGS IS FIT TO BECOME ONE OF MY RED KNIGHTS. MY KHALA COULD DEFEAT THEM ... ALL AT ONCE!

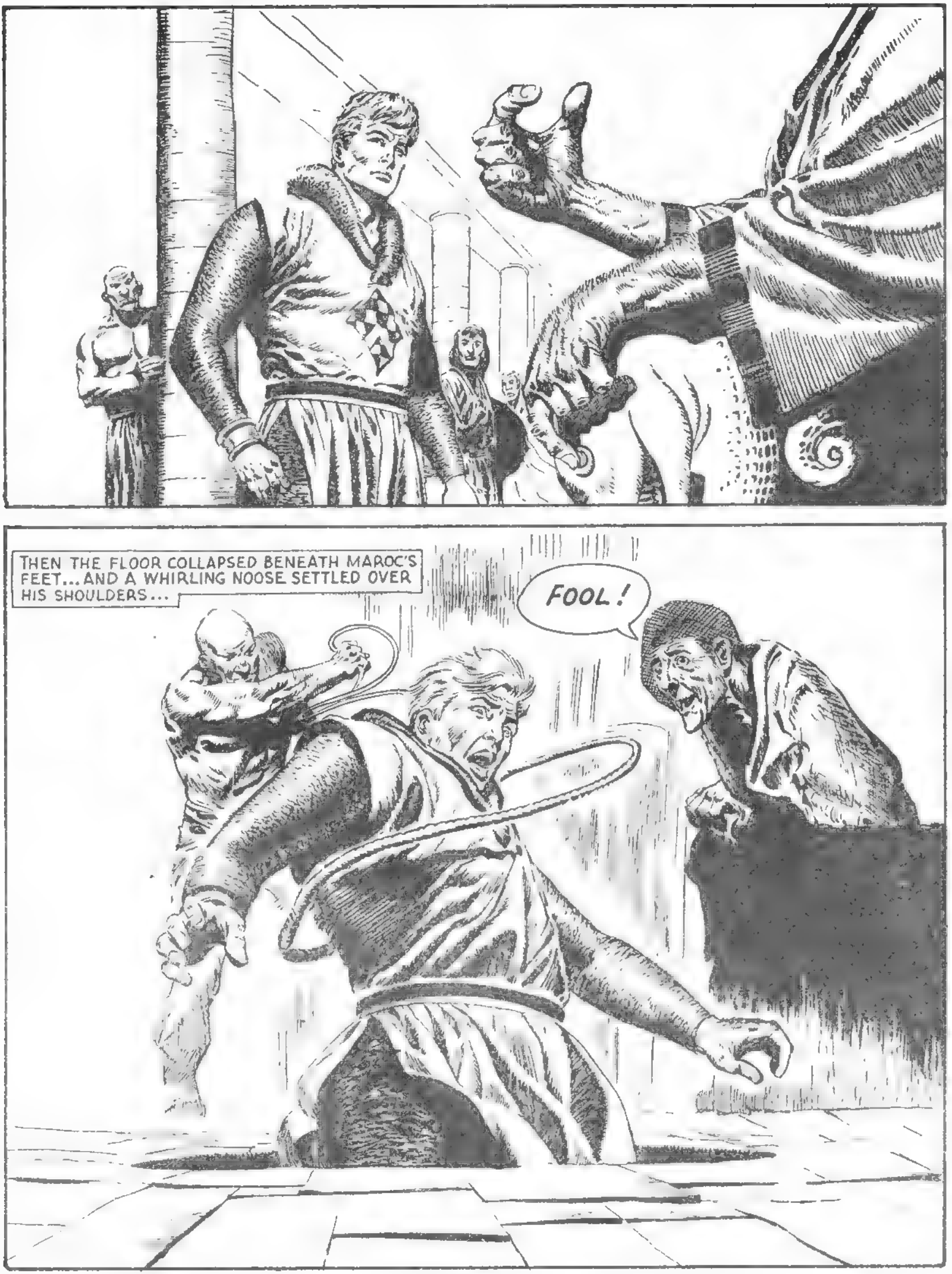
THEN——
THERE IS YOUR TRAINED PUPPY! NOW, TELL ME WHAT YOU HAVE DONE WITH CARLOS, SON OF DON MIGUEL!
BUT ALTHOUGH IT SEEMED THAT MAROC THE MIGHTY HELD THE UPPER HAND, RAMON WAS IN DEADLY DANGER...
NO! NO! I HAVE STOLEN NOTHING! I...I ONLY CAME TO LOOK!
DEATH IS THE PENALTY FOR THOSE WHO WOULD STEAL THE TREASURE OF SATANA!

I ASK YOU FOR THE FINAL TIME. WHERE IS CARLOS, SON OF DON MIGUEL?

THEN THE LOOK OF FEAR DROPPED FROM THE EVIL FACE OF SATANA...
VERY WELL, STRONG MAN. THROW YOUR STONE! BUT THE MOMENT YOU DO, YOUR FRIEND WILL DIE ALSO!

RAMON!
I...I AM SORRY, MAROC. BUT THE SIGHT OF ALL THAT TREASURE WAS TOO MUCH FOR ME. I HAD TO.... TO LOOK AT IT!

IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT YOUR GYPSY FRIEND INTENDED TO STEAL MY TREASURE, STRONG MAN.
... YOUR TREASURE? YOU MEAN THE HOARD OF RANSOM THAT YOUR RED KNIGHTS LOOTED FROM ALL WHO DWELL IN MORDA...
THE NOBLEMEN FROM WHOM MY KNIGHTS TOOK RANSOM ARE NOT FIT TO RULE. IT IS RIGHT THAT I SHOULD DESTROY THEM, SO THAT I, SATANA, CAN RULE IN THEIR PLACE!
COME CLOSER, ENGLISHMAN. I WILL BARGAIN WITH YOU FOR YOUR FRIEND'S LIFE.

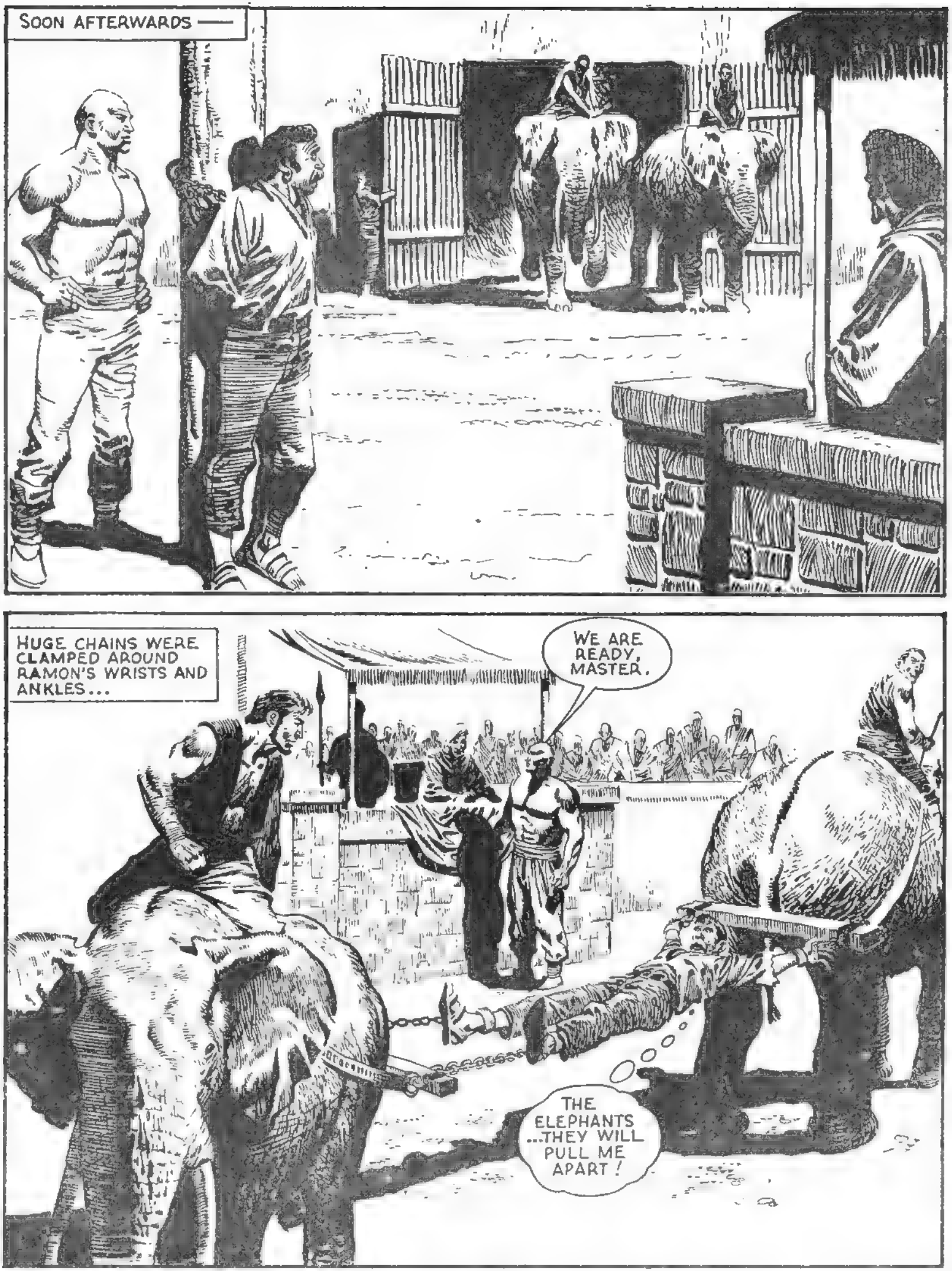

THEN THE FLOOR COLLAPSED BENEATH MAROC'S FEET... AND A WHIRLING NOOSE SETTLED OVER HIS SHOULDERS...
FOOL!

A FEW FEET BELOW MAROC'S DANGLING BODY, A HIDEOUS HEAD REARED UP...
IT IS THE MONSTER OF THE SWAMP!

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW, ENGLISHMAN ? IF YOU ATTEMPT TO CLIMB UP, MY SLAVE WILL CUT THE ROPE, AND THE ROPE IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD YOUR WEIGHT FOR LONGER THAN AN HOUR...

SO, EITHER WAY, YOU HAVE ONLY AN HOUR TO LIVE BEFORE YOU DIE BY THE POISON FANGS OF MY SWAMP BEAST. IN THAT HOUR YOU WILL LEARN TO REGRET THAT YOU MADE AN ENEMY OF SATANA !

THEN SATANA GESTURED TOWARDS THE FEAR-FILLED GYPSY...
LEAVE THE STRONG MAN TO REFLECT UPON HIS FATE. BUT WE SHALL HAVE SPORT WITH HIS MISERABLE FRIEND. TAKE HIM TO THE ARENA!


SOON AFTERWARDS —
HUGE CHAINS WERE CLAMPED AROUND RAMON'S WRISTS AND ANKLES...
WE ARE READY, MASTER.
THE ELEPHANTS ...THEY WILL PULL ME APART!

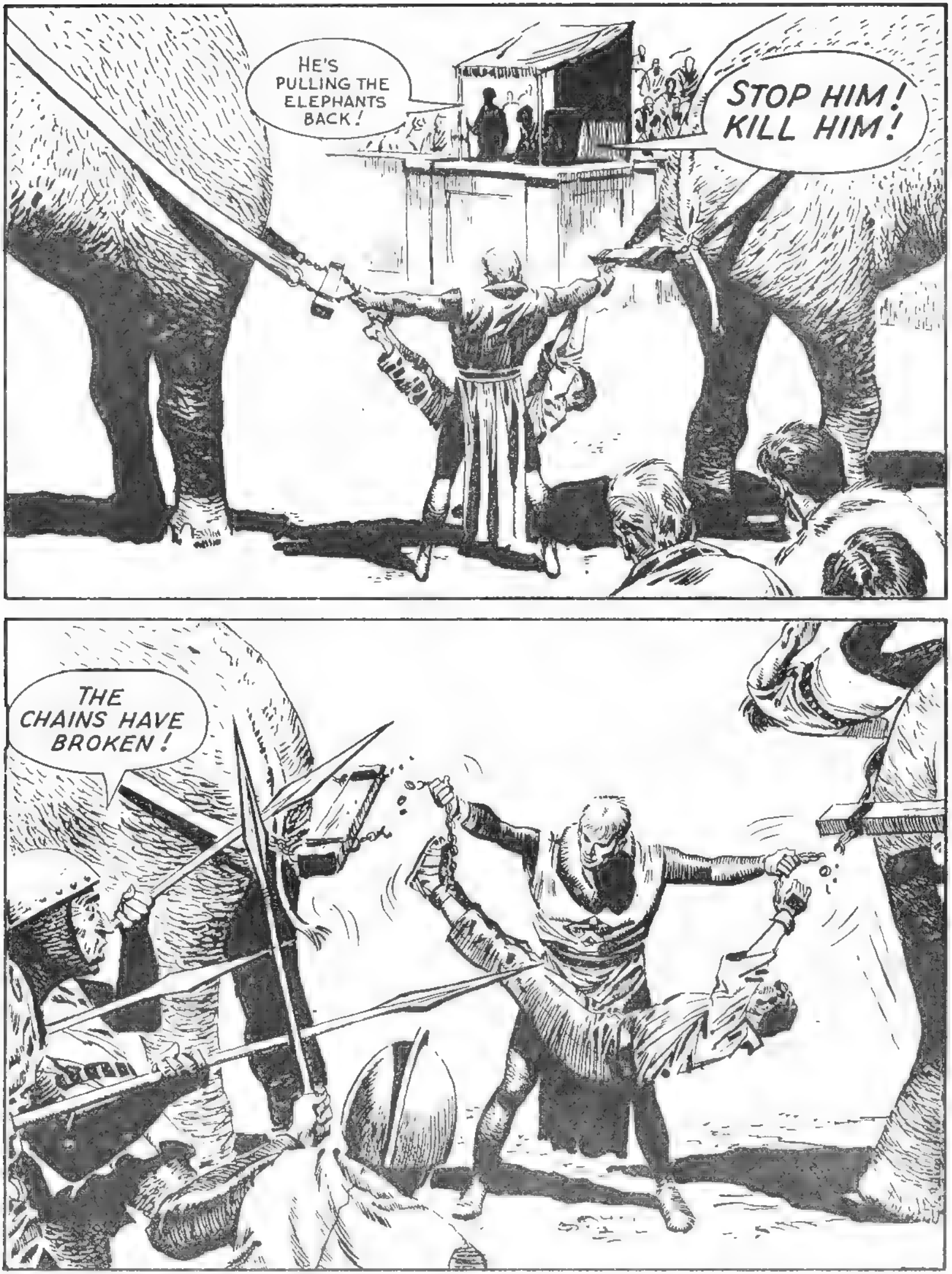
I SHALL MISS THE SPORT IN SATANA'S ARENA. IF I STAY HERE GUARDING YOU, ENGLISHMAN. BUT I CAN CUT THE ROPE AND TELL SATANA THAT IT BROKE UNDER YOUR WEIGHT...
FOOL, DO YOU REALLY THINK I SHALL LET YOU CLIMB OUT OF THE PIT?
THERE'S ONLY ONE CHANCE!
BUT MAROC'S ONLY ANSWER WAS TO THRUST WITH HANDS AND FEET AT THE SLIMY STONE WALLS OF THE PIT...
WHAT IS HE DOING?

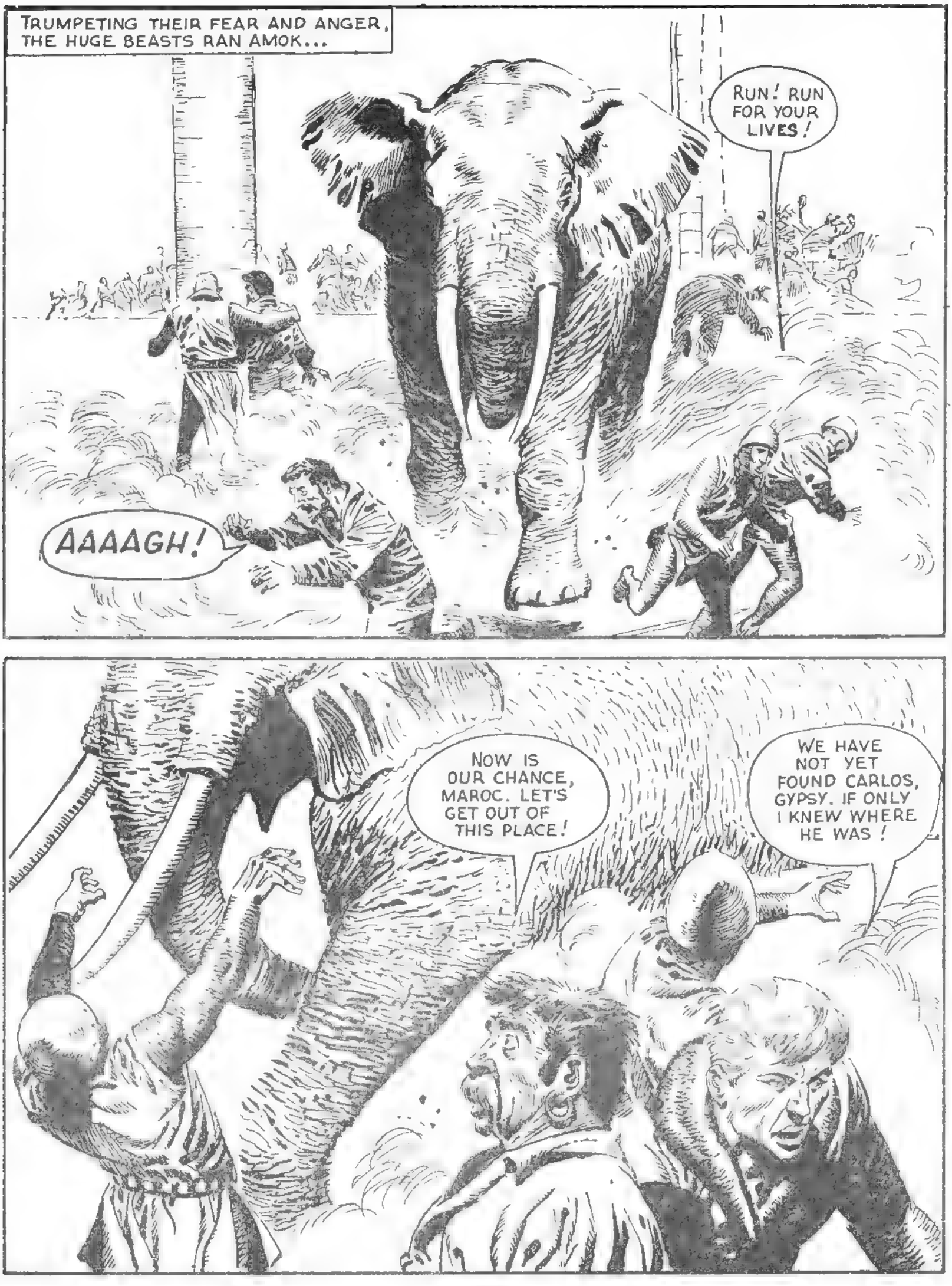
HIS ENEMIES KNEW NOTHING OF THE GIANT STRENGTH WHICH MAROC GAINED FROM THE MAGIC ARMLET HE WORE ON HIS RIGHT WRIST...
AAAAAAGH!
MAROC'S MIGHTY MUSCLES FORCED THE SIDES OF THE PIT TO CRACK!

STILL TIED TO THE ROPE, MAROC CLIMBED FREE...
THE SWAMP BEAST HAD ITS VICTIM AFTER ALL!

MERCY! I HAVE DONE YOU NO HARM! NO! NO!
THAT'S THE GYPSY'S VOICE! WHAT ARE THOSE FIENDS DOING TO HIM?

INSIDE THE ARENA, KHALA BOWED TO HIS MASTER...
GIVE THE WORD, GREAT SATANA, AND THE ELEPHANTS SHALL PULL THIS SPINELESS DOG APART!
BUT EVEN AS THE GYPSY'S CHAINS TIGHTENED...
MAROC, SAVE ME!
HE HAS ESCAPED FROM THE PIT!


HE'S PULLING THE ELEPHANTS BACK!
STOP HIM! KILL HIM!
THE CHAINS HAVE BROKEN!


TRUMPETING THEIR FEAR AND ANGER, THE HUGE BEASTS RAN AMOK...
RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
AAAAGH!
NOW IS OUR CHANCE, MAROC. LET'S GET OUT OF THIS PLACE!
WE HAVE NOT YET FOUND CARLOS, GYPSY. IF ONLY I KNEW WHERE HE WAS!

A WALL CRUMBLED BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF A RAMPAGING BEAST...
WE'VE FOUND HIM! THERE IS CARLOS!

THEN A MASSIVE PILLAR CRACKED...
LOOK!

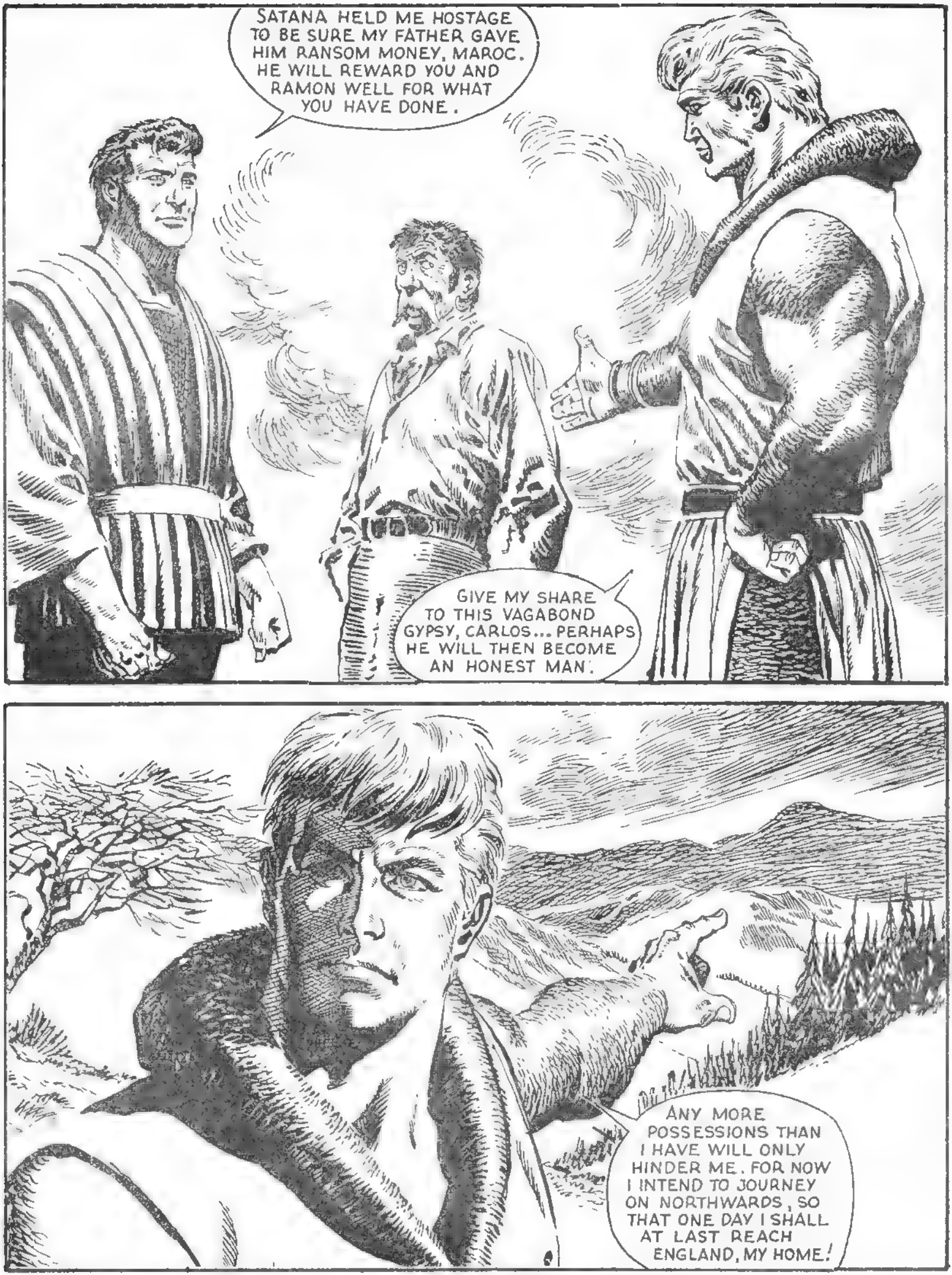
FROM ABOVE CAME A MENACING RUMBLE...
MAROC, THE ROOF IS GOING TO CAVE IN! NOTHING CAN SAVE US!
RAMON, YOU AND CARLOS GET OUT OF THIS PLACE. I'LL FOLLOW LATER!
THE ROOF IS GOING TO FALL IN!

MIGHTY ARMS, POSSESSED OF GIANT STRENGTH GAINED FROM THE MAGIC ARMLET ON MAROC'S RIGHT WRIST, ENCIRCLED THE TOPPLING PILLAR...
THERE IS THE ENEMY OF OUR MASTER, SATANA!
NO, FOOL! CAN'T YOU SEE HE IS HOLDING THE PILLAR UPRIGHT? KILL HIM AND WE WILL ALL DIE.
RAMON AND CARLOS RAN TO THE DRAWBRIDGE WHICH LED TO OPEN COUNTRY...
IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR US TO ESCAPE AND LEAVE MAROC BEHIND, GYPSY...
HE TOLD US TO DO SO ... AND I HAVE LEARNED IT IS BEST TO OBEY MAROC. COME ON!
HERE COME SATANA'S MEN!
WHAT ARE WE TO DO, CARLOS? WE CANNOT FIGHT ALL OF THEM!

INSIDE THE TREMBLING MOUNTAIN, MAROC HAD SEEN THE DANGER THAT THREATENED HIS FRIENDS...
I'VE GOT TO HELP THEM!
WITH A SUDDEN, POWERFUL BLOW, MAROC PUSHED THE PILLAR ASIDE...
NO LONGER SUPPORTED BY THE MAIN PILLAR, THE MOUNTAIN CRACKED AND CRUMBLED!

THEN...
FALLING ROCKS HAVE SMASHED THE BRIDGE!
AAAAGH!
CARLOS! THERE IS MAROC!
BUT THERE IS NO BRIDGE FOR HIM TO CROSS. AND ANY SECOND NOW THE WHOLE MOUNTAIN WILL FALL INTO THE SWAMP!

MAROC THE MIGHTY SPRANG —
JUST AS HE PULLED HIMSELF TO SAFETY —
WE WERE JUST IN TIME, MAROC!


SATANA HELD ME HOSTAGE TO BE SURE MY FATHER GAVE HIM RANSOM MONEY, MAROC. HE WILL REWARD YOU AND RAMON WELL FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE.
GIVE MY SHARE TO THIS VAGABOND GYPSY, CARLOS... PERHAPS HE WILL THEN BECOME AN HONEST MAN.
ANY MORE POSSESSIONS THAN I HAVE WILL ONLY HINDER ME. FOR NOW I INTEND TO JOURNEY ON NORTHWARDS, SO THAT ONE DAY I SHALL AT LAST REACH ENGLAND, MY HOME!

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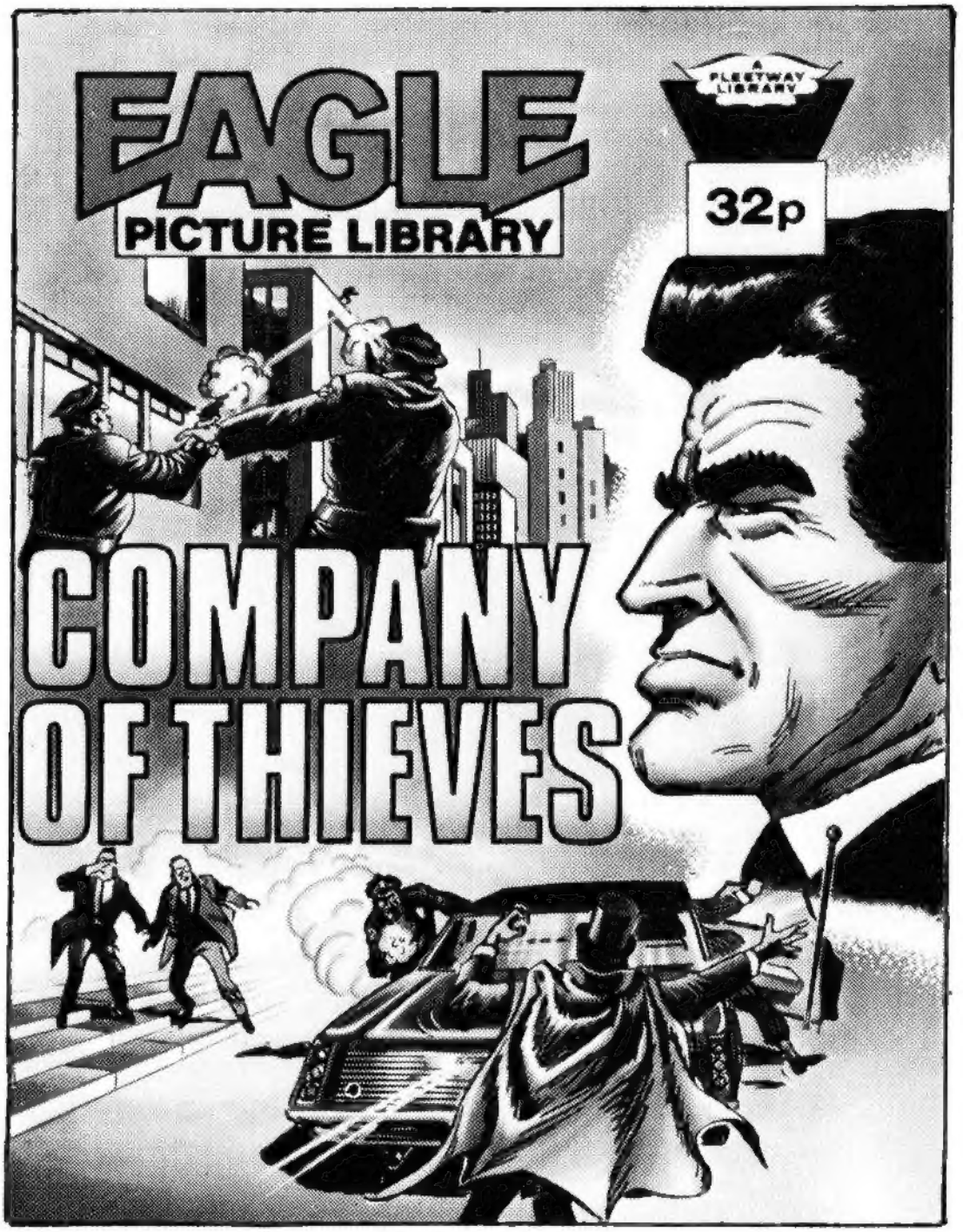

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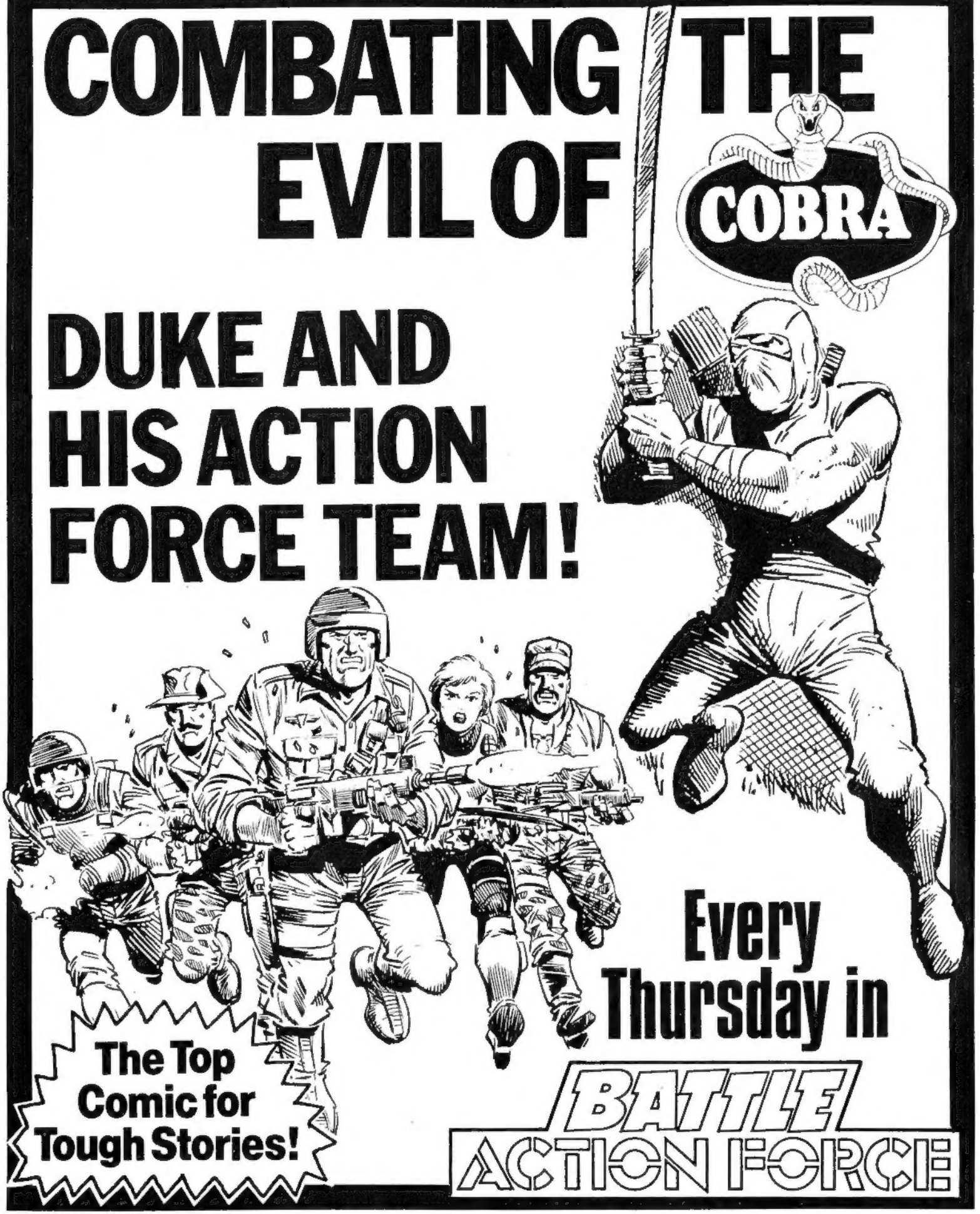

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